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‘Innovative’ model of group prenatal care comes to Fairfield

Centering Pregnancy is evidenced to reduce premature births and infant deaths.

By Hannah Poturalski

Staff Writer

FAIRFIELD — An obstetrics and gynecology practice here will be Butler County’s first to offer Centering Pregnancy.

Dr. Robert Arrom, founder and chief executive officer of the Women’s Center for Health, said the evidence-based model of group prenatal care will be offered as early as September at the office on Symmes Road.

Arrom, as well as Dr. Jennifer Frey and Rachel Sizemore and Amanda Treon, certified nurse midwives, will each manage several groups of eight to 10 women.

“Centering has the potential to really deliver what traditional prenatal care hasn’t been able to deliver,” Arrom said including lower rates of premature births. “I think it’s new, innovative, exciting and will improve compliance with visits.”

During centering pregnancy, expectant mothers meet in a group setting in the nine months leading up to delivery and for six weeks following the birth. The expectant mothers have individual assessments with the care provider before taking part in self-care activities and discussion of key topics such as breastfeeding and safe sleep, according to Centering Healthcare Institute, Inc.

Arrom’s office received \$30,000 in funds from the Butler County Partnership to Reduce Infant Mortality to assist in start-up costs including materials and training. PRIM, formed in 2013, has been working to bring centering pregnancy to Butler County since first announcing the intent in July 2014.

Centering Pregnancy is already offered at several facilities in Cincinnati and Dayton. The University of Cincinnati Medical Center in 2003 was the first site in Greater Cincinnati to offer the Centering Pregnancy model.

Toni King, of Hamilton, who’s in school to become a certified nurse midwife, is co-lead of the PRIM centering pregnancy group.

“We’re so excited; the hardest part was actually finding a practice,” King said. “This will be the first centering practice in Butler County. It will be great for our women.”

Arrom said while the traditional model of prenatal care has achieved a reduction in the infant mortality rate, it hasn’t made a dent in the rate of premature births or teaching of parenting skills. Arrom said 12 percent of births are premature, and it’s the leading cause of infant death.

“A lot of these topics get missed in prenatal care,” Arrom said.

In fact, when you add up the time from 10 prenatal care visits in the traditional model, the expectant mother only spends about two hours with the provider, according to Arrom.

The group prenatal visits will run between 90 minutes and two hours for a total of 20 hours of prenatal care over the course of 10 sessions, Arrom said.

“There’s a lot more time for education, nutrition, how to take care of your self,” Arrom said.

Arrom said through peer resources, family support and facilitated discussions, the women learn parenting skills to reduce neglect and child abuse; how to use birth control to safely space out pregnancies; and breastfeeding techniques.

Other topics include common discomforts and body changes in pregnancy; family planning; managing stress; labor and birth; planning for pediatric care; and emotional adjustments, according to the Centering Pregnancy notebook.

Arrom said the women can also form a “life-lasting bond.”

King said she’s looking forward to seeing what impact the social support piece will have on the Butler County women who lack family support. She said when that happens, a woman can become depressed and under chronic stress.

“This will be huge in building friendships,” King said.

Ohio’s infant mortality rate, measured by the number of live-born babies who die before their first birthday, is among the worst in the nation. The state’s black infant mortality rate — 15.45 deaths per 1,000 births — is twice the white infant mortality rate of 6.39, according to Ohio Department of Health.

Representatives from the Centering Institute will be at the Fairfield office in August for a month of training with the four providers, a nurse educator, centering coordinator, and obstetrical advocate.

The Center for Women’s Health has about 9,000 patients visits and 320 births per year, according to the practice. Just under 50 percent of pregnant women to the practice are on Medicaid.

Centering Pregnancy

For more information, visit the Center for Women’s Health online at www.cincybabydoc.com; the Butler County Partnership to Reduce Infant Mortality at www.bcesc.org/bc-prim.aspx; or Centering Healthcare Institute at www.centeringhealthcare.org.

Butler County PRIM has a second round of \$30,000 in start-up assistance available to an interested obstetrics practice in Butler County. Any interested practice can call 513-887-5251 to discuss how to get started.

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